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As Wild Birds Sing



The whole bird sings because it must
As first at times its outstretched wings.
A bit of song enchanted dream,
Attuned to life, with joy and trust,
Its life its whole heart and song
Because it must.



Poems

MARY RANDALL LEE



NEW YORK

As Wild Birds Sing

Poems

BY

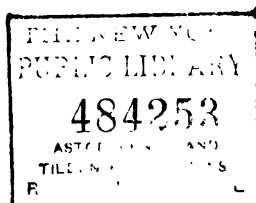
MARY RANDALL SHIPPEY



Robert Grier Cooke

NEW YORK

MDCDIV



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TO
The True Hearts
THAT HAVE MADE THE SUNSHINE
FOR THE SINGER
AND TO
THE WISELY LOVING
WHO HAVE TAUGHT HER HOW TO SING
THIS VOLUME IS
GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

M. F. CROW MAY 27 10 - 27cts

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As Wild Birds Sing

As Wild Birds Sing

The wild bird sings because it must,
As first it tries its untaught wings.
A bit of song-enchanted dust
Attuned to life and joy and trust ;
It lifts its little heart and sings
Because it must.

Its free wild note ecstatic rings
Of glad young worlds and dear love-dreams.
What fond hopes thrill those fine heart-strings !
What transports stir those small brown wings !
Aërial rapture's myriad themes
The wild bird sings !

The wild bird sings because it must ;
And when its song no longer flings
A rose-light round the drear world's dust,—
Lift, O ye sad hearts, lift and trust !—
The wild bird yet shall wake the spring
Because it must.

The poet sings because he must.

Like yon wild bird upon the wing,
A bit of finely-fashioned dust
Athrob with life and love and trust.

The poet's heart doth lift and sing
Because it must.

He feels the stir of viewless wings;

His ear with unvoiced music teems;
It minds him of forgotten things:
The scent of Eden round them clings;
He may not tell his inmost dreams
And so he sings.

Nor prince's praise nor smile of kings

Can woo the song from poet's breast.
'Tis but the touch of lowly things
Can wake his clear harp's tenderest strings;
The saddest find the sweetest rest
When poet sings.

The poet sings because he must;

And when his heart a tuneless thing
Lies silent, lo! above its dust,
Athrill with life and love and trust,
His soul shall lift itself and sing
Because it must.

Three Little Stockings

Three little stockings, dainty and small,
Hanging against the fire-lit wall,
Empty they're hanging, limp and still,
Waiting for Santa Claus, ready to fill.

The Christmas log, now burning low,
Lighting the room with its fitful glow,
Reveals far back in the shadows deep,
Three little children fast asleep.

Over them bending, with happy smile
Lighting her beautiful face the while,
A mother is watching with loving care,
Tenderly breathing for each a prayer.

At morning dawn three pairs of eyes
Open and sparkle with glad surprise;
For there close against the sun-lit wall,
Hang the three stockings, dainty and small.

No longer empty, and limp, and cold,
But round and full as they can hold.

And the three voices shout in childish delight,
"Santa Claus *did* find our stocking last night!"

Three little stockings, knit of wool,
Hang in the sunlight, round and full.
Three little hearts are happy and light,
Making one fireside joyous and bright.

.
Three little stockings, worn and old,
Hanging against the chimney cold:
Empty they're hanging, limp and still,
Waiting for Santa Claus, ready to fill.

The full moon through the window streams,
Flooding the room with its pale, cold beams;
Only an attic, plain and small,
With a rude cot-bed against the wall.

Three childish faces, round and fair,
In innocent sleep are lying there;
Close by the cot whereon they lay,
A mother is kneeling, trying to pray.

Her pale, sad face and silvered hair
Tell of a life of want and care.

Nothing to buy her little ones bread,
And scarcely a place to lay her head.

As the three empty stockings meet her eyes,
Is it strange that her faith grows cold and dies?
Or that, as she vainly is trying to pray,
"O Father, have mercy!" is all she can say?

On Christmas morning three pairs of eyes
Open in sorrowful, mute surprise.
For there, close against the chimney old,
Hang the three stockings, empty and cold.

In one sad chorus the voices three
Cry, "Santa Claus didn't remember me!"
And the poor mother's heart sinks deep in despair
As that pitiful wail rings out on the air.

Three empty stockings! The tale that they tell
Is known in many a home too well.
Three little hearts are heavy with woe,
To think that old Santa neglected them so.

O ye who have plenty, enough and to spare,
Whose children know nothing of want or of care,
While making them happy, forget not, I pray,
The children whose stockings are empty to-day.

The Teacher

With a longing look in her weary eyes,
And a half-unconscious sigh,
She gazes out on the fresh green grass,
And the glorious azure sky.

The warning bell is in her hand,
As she stands in the open door,
But mute and still its shadow lies
In the sunshine on the floor.

Her thoughts are wandering far away;
She takes no note of time;
It matters not that the little clock
Is on the stroke of nine.

The dreamy sound of moving trees,
And music of the stream,
Invite her from her task to turn,
And only gaze and dream.

The same old round of irksome toil
She follows without change,

And is it strange her mind should seek
A wider, freer range?

'Tis hard, indeed, to bind the thoughts,
By pleasing fancy led,
Within the narrow sphere that fate
Compels the feet to tread.

But soon the happy, joyous laugh,
And sounds of playful strife,
Recall her wayward thoughts again,
To the humdrum work of life.

She sees a group of boys and girls,
So busy at their play,
And turns her, with a half-formed wish
That she were free as they.

But courage, weary, toiling one,
Your field of work is wide;
And though your lot may oft seem dark,
It has its sunny side.

The little seeds you daily sow
Will reach a fertile soil;
And by a harvest bountiful,
Repay you for your toil.

Twilight Fancies

From out the sky the sunset hue is fading,
The shadows deepen over hill and plain ;
A subtle charm, the mystic hour pervading,
Sends strangest fancies through my quickened
brain.

Upon my ear mysterious sounds are falling,
A tiny footstep, light as summer air,
Draws near, and nearer, every sense entralling,
Pausing at last beside my easy chair.

Two starry eyes, from out the darkness shining,
Gaze into mine through floating rings of gold.
Soft baby fingers, with my own entwining,
With gentle pressure thrill me as of old.

The starry eyes are full of tender pleading,
My heart thrills warm, responsive to their prayer ;
I stretch my arms, the sudden impulse heeding,
I bend my lips to meet the empty air.

Ah! weary heart, whose lonely, nameless grieving,
Not even healing time can lull to sleep ;
Turn back to life, and bear thy cross believing,
Till welcome death shall bid thee cease to weep.

A Tribute

If angels gather up each generous deed,
Each kindly thought and gentle word of ours,
And safely upward bear the precious seed
To live again in fair immortal flowers;
Methinks at last, when up the shining way
His hand shall guide thy all too-willing feet,
Thou'lt find in that fair land of perfect day
A well-filled garden of those blossoms sweet.

My Lost Ideal

I saw them fade and wither, one by one,
The dewy buds of youth and pleasure sweet;
The frail shy blooms of friendship and of love,
All dead and odorless beneath my feet.

I saw, yet murmured not, that o'er life's way
Were strewn more thorns than roses, for I knew
Where, close beside Hope's ever-flowing spring,
Safe sheltered in my heart, a flow'ret grew.

Fairer and sweeter far than youth or joy,
I watched it daily with a jealous care,
And cried exultant: "Take them—all the rest—
But leave me this one flower—my Ideal fair!"

Then Fate, beholding love so strong and true
It nothing asked or missed, with envy rife,
Tore from my breast the fondly cherished thing,
And left me bleeding—robbed of more than life.

The March Robin

Is there any sound that's sweeter
Than the scouting robin's twitter,
When he comes to try the weather in the spring—
Braving winds and snow-storms laggard
Undismayed, though gaunt and haggard
Winter totters on his throne, still reigning king?

Trees are bare and uninviting;
Frosty night-air sharp and biting;
Not a single bud or blossom greets his eye;
But though nothing bids him tarry,
Yet he poises, blithe and airy,
'Twixt the heaven, frosty earth and leaden sky.

Such a prospect, dark and cheerless,
Well might daunt a soul less fearless,
Or more doubtful of a kind Creator's care;
But no trouble for the morrow
Trustful robin seeks to borrow,
And his happy voice defies the wintry air.

Welcome, songster brave and cheery,
Come to gladden when we're weary
Of the cold forbidding monarch's rigid sway!
Glad are we to give thee greeting;
Sorry that the winds are cheating
Thee of shelter in this rude, uncourteous way.

Needless though, our kind compassion,
Since in such heroic fashion
Thou canst bear the dire discomforts of thy lot;
And we scarce would dare to proffer
Refuge such as we might offer,
Since for cold and wind thou carest not a jot.

Warble on, thou merry-hearted;
Unrepining, though departed
Are the beauties of thy last year's nesting-tree.
What a lesson in thy singing!
With a fearless trust 'tis ringing:
Faith in future good, though dark the present be.

Found Dead

Prone on the earth, with pale hands tightly clutched,
And rigid features sicklied o'er with gray,
Where he had kept his willing tryst with death,
They found him lying at the dawn of day.

"Died by his own rash hand!" the verdict read.
Dull horror mingled with grave pity's tone.
Ah, me! The awful pathos of those words,
"By his own hand!" there 'neath the stars, alone.

No friend to mark the soul's sharp agony,
Or stay the hand that longed to set it free.
Where are your tears? O, warm humanity!
Where are your tears, if not for such as he?

The dew that gathers in compassion's eye,
When hungry wretches die for want of bread,
Should pour itself in crystal rivers now;
A heart is starved! A warm, true heart is dead!

Untaught in Wisdom's way, it never knew
Of food, that all who need may freely take.
Hope's fountain dry; Faith's star too early set;
Poor heart, alas! what could it do but break?

And who shall judge that last despairing act,
Or dare impute to him the coward's part?
Is strength to conquer and come off unscathed
The only test that proves a valiant heart?

What mortal sense can gauge the tempter's might,
Or weigh the pangs the tortured spirit bore,
Till, all too long and sorely tried, at last
Through weariness, it gave the struggle o'er?

Yet one there is, whose wisdom comprehends
The heart so strangely fashioned to his will;
Whose hand alone can move the hidden springs
That prompt to acts of seeming good or ill.

And He it is—blest thought!—who justly notes
The conflict waged in every human breast,
And on whose love divine, compassionate,
No soul, however wrong, need fear to rest.

Little Mischief

Who broke off all the pansies
And stuck them here in a row,
As if the poor little blossoms
All by themselves could grow?
It couldn't have been the old gray cat;
She, I am sure, is wiser than that.

Ah! there is a wee sun-bonnet
Down by the tulip bed;
And somehow under its brim, I know,
Is hidden a curly head.
I wonder now what mischief new
The curls and the bonnet are planning to do.

Close to the nodding gingham,
Still as a mouse, I creep,
And round under the drooping frill,
Quietly try to peep.
Dear me! how I laugh! and so would you,
To see what the baby is trying to do.

Into a tulip's yellow cup
The dimpled fingers push
The tiny nest that a peewee built
In the syringa bush;
While softly murmur the sweet lips red,
"Thith a nither plathe for a birdith bed."

Dear little foolish head
Under the bonnet pink!
I wonder though, if bigger ones
Do not sometimes think
That Nature's ways might gain a bit
By a little help from human wit.

My Prayer

I tried to pray, while o'er my storm-tossed soul
Black waves of sorrow broke with sullen roar;
But my rebellious heart would only cry,
"Spare me this cross! O, spare me!" o'er and o'er.

No answer came; although I tried to still
The raging tempest till my soul should hear
The glad reprieve that Heaven must surely send,
When such appeal should pierce to Mercy's ear.

Long,—long I held my very spirit's breath,
To catch the blessed whisper; but in vain.
And wilder, fiercer for the moment's calm,
The pent-up storm burst o'er my soul again.

It beat and tossed me till, its fury spent,
A vanquished thing it left me, and I lay
Like wounded bird, too weak to struggle more;
Too hopeless, worn and weary e'en to pray.

No refuge could I see. No staff of hope
To aid my steps. No star of faith to lead
My groping spirit. While the heavy weight
Of anguish swayed me, as a strengthless reed.

Then, in my broken, weak and helpless plight,
My spirit drawn to utmost tension fine,
With fainting breath and whitening lips, I cried:
"Help me, O Lord, to *bear* this cross of mine!"

Through the hushed silence came no spoken word:
No sign that outward sense could feel or see;
But from the wondrous lightness of my cross,
I knew that God had heard, and answered me.

Only Soft Hammers Break the Hardest Stones

Amongst the flock my gentle Master gave
 Into my care, to watch, and guard, and keep,
Till such good time as He should say to me,
 “Ah! shepherd, canst thou bring me *all* my sheep?”
Was one, whom much it grieved my soul to find,
 Indifferent to the voice that called him home
From flowery paths, replete with lurking thorns
 O'er which his wayward feet inclined to roam.

With earnest zeal for my dear Master's cause,
 But wrong conception of the lesson told,
I sought, by warning threat and stern command,
 To bring the wanderer back into the fold.
But sadly failed. And to the work unused,
 It soon fell out that I disheartened grew;
And sore oppressed with doubt and self-distrust,
 My futile labors thought not to renew.

In such despairing mood, I wandered forth
 Among the busy workers of my flock;
And pausing idly, watched the easeful way
 A stalwart workman broke the flinty rock;

Each rhythmic blow the stone as surely cleft
As though the substance were but yielding sand;
And much I marvelled when I chanced to note
A *leaden* hammer in the brawny hand.

"How comes it, man," said I, "that you do use
A hammer of this soft and yielding stuff?
'Twould seem, to break such flinty rocks as these,
A tool of *iron* scarce were hard enough."
I could but mark the tolerant, mirthful ring
My want of knowledge brought into his tones,
As, cap in hand, smiling he answered, "Sir,
None *but* soft hammers break the hardest stones."

Ah! like a lesson from the Master sent,
The simple words came home unto my heart
With deeper meaning than the workman knew,
But close I kept and pondered them apart.
Once more with eager haste, and hope renewed,
I sought the task but lately given o'er;
And, by that patient wisdom, haply learned,
Won him, whom such sweet means had won before.

O gentle Teacher! Pity and forgive
Thy self-blind pupil; taught at last to see,
As softest hammers break the hardest stones,
So hardest hearts, by soft, must broken be.

Above the Mist

Oft o'er the narrow valley hangs a mist,
So low, so dense, that, to our wondering eyes,
All things distorted seem,—uncanny,—dread:
The most familiar wearing strangest guise.

No art may serve to lift the ghostly veil,
Or pierce beyond the sullen, vaporous gloom;
Though from its chilling presence we may shrink,
As from the awful nearness of the tomb.

But either side the valley lie the hills,
Resting their rugged foreheads 'gainst the sky;
And if the shining summits we but gain,
The mist, all sun-kissed, at our feet will lie.

Thus o'er the spirit sometimes falls a mist,
Distorting all that erstwhile seemed so fair.
Friends seem no longer friends,—the dreary world,
Naught but the dwelling-place of brooding care.

Then must we rise, and bravely seek to climb
The lofty mountain, Faith alone can rear,
For, high above the mists of doubt, we'll find
God's love, forever shining, strong and clear.

Who Took Care of Baby

"O, dear!" said poor mamma, "there's so much to do;
I wonder if really I'll ever get through!
Now if only some brownie or good little fay
Would offer to take care of Baby to-day!"

Now Nelly was busy with ribbon and lace,
Contriving a bonnet to suit dolly's face.
She kept very still, but she grew just as red;
For she heard every word that her mamma had said.

The baby was laughing and crowing with glee,
As jolly and happy as Baby could be;
But though such a frolicsome, fun-loving elf,
Too little was he to take care of himself.

When mamma had patiently waited a while,
She put Baby down with a queer little smile,
And ringing a sharp little bell on the wall,
Said: "Halloo, Doctor Davis, I wish you would call.

"We are none of us sick ; but I've so much to do ;
For nurse is away and the kitchen maid, too ;
You see there's nobody with Baby to stay ;
So perhaps you would better just take him away."

Here Nelly jumped up from her seat on the rug,
And ran to the Baby and gave him a hug.
Her chin was all puckered, her lip drawn awry ;
And she looked just as if she were going to cry.

Her mamma turned round with a look of surprise,
Then called out "Halloo!" with a laugh in her eyes ;
"Never mind, Doctor Davis, a good little fay
Has come to take care of the Baby to-day."

My Thrush

The sombre depth of southern wood;
A fine leaf-scented atmosphere;
A spot so hushed I almost feel
The heart of silence throbbing here;
The only sound upon the air,—
A subtle note of harmony,—
The lullaby of yonder brook
That sings my mood to reverie.

Another hour! another scene,
In clime less soft and sensuous sweet,
Comes back to me in vivid dream.
Again I walk, with joyous feet,
The narrow path that winds between
The close-grown trunks of social trees
Whose branches keep a lazy time
To music in the low-tuned breeze.

Another brook as softly sings
Its purling way o'er pebbly bed,
While all the vibrant verdure breathes
Its tender secrets overhead.

And somewhere from the leafy shade
That screens him from too-curious eyes
The poet of the wood awakes
Vague memories of Paradise.

Why do I start in sudden way,
While strangely all my pulses thrill?
Did I but dream, or did I hear
Again that thrush's liquid thrill?
No sound, no motion, stirs the dense
Green canopy above my head.
And wooing back the spell, I search
For that fair day-dream's broken thread.

Ah! suddenly it falls again,
Soft breaking through the mystic hush,
Pure, pristine strain from Paradise.
Unerring soul; *it is* thy thrush!
How came he here, sweet rover from
That land beneath those distant skies?
I only know he is the same,
And listen, awed, with humid eyes,

For him to greet me once again
With that long-loved, familiar note.
What told the bird I wandered here,
An exile in these wilds remote?

Was it some kindred chord of pain
That drew him to this dim retreat,
My aching, homesick heart to stir
With strain half sad yet wholly sweet?

Dear, gentle bird!—a wanderer, too—
Since this far land is dear to thee,
No more will I, a stranger, pine;
Where'er thou art is home to me.

Saturday Night

'Tis Saturday night! 'tis Saturday night!
And the children must all have a scrub.
Well, Tommy, and Teddy, and fat little Neddy;
One by one they must go in the tub.

How they scuffle and shout, and frolic about,
While nurse tries to pull off Tom's jacket.
Oh! there's nothing for noise like three healthy boys;
How can they keep up such a racket?

At last they are ready, and fun-loving Teddy
Dives into the water head first.
Then Tom holds him down till he threatens to drown,
While they giggle as though they would burst.

But their giggling hushes when nurse with her brushes
And towels and soap goes to work.
And the poor little laddies all wish they were paddies,
This bother of washing to shirk.

But now comes the fun when the others are done;
For Neddy is given no quarter;
But lifted in air, and dropped, unaware,
Right into the terrible water.

Oh! what a commotion!—"Tis like a small ocean,—
The tub when that rascal is in it.
How he struggles and squeals, and kicks up his heels,
Till nurse takes him out in a minute.

Now, spite of the frown, a snowy night-gown
Is pulled over each curly head;
And after their prayers, they are hurried up-stairs,
Kissed, and cosily tucked into bed.

Where Shall Rest Be Found?

If thou dost seek from nature's heart relief,
Respite from care, and solace for thy grief,
Go not beside the restless moaning sea,
It hath no power to soothe and comfort thee.

Its mighty breast heaved by convulsive throes
Feels no compassion for our punier woes.
Sweet sympathy its selfish heart ne'er thrills,
Its misery dwarfs and shames all lesser ills.

Like wounded giant tossing in his pain,
From shore to shore it flings itself in vain;
Seeking some balm its anguish to assuage,
In dull despair it moans from age to age.

But where the monster's hoarse complainings cease,
Go seek the true abode of calm-eyed Peace:
Blue, slum'brous mountains, gilt by golden suns;
God's temples builded for His stricken ones.

Here naught rebels at His all-wise decree ;
Whate'er He wills, content to do, or be ;
Each thing create, its mission doth fulfill
In cheerful resignation to His will.

And here, where perfect harmony divine,
God voiced in nature, thrills the spirit fine,
Thy weary heart secure may rest and pray,
Till all its load of grief is blest away.

Life

What is it then to live—to truly live?
What but to gather, thus the more to give?
To glean from nature's book her precious things,
And give to them thought's swift, far-soaring wings.

To rise above the selfish, sordid aim;
To work, not for self-glory, not for fame;
But that the wisdom gained and freely given
May help our fellow-mortals on toward heaven.

To fill a place that no one else can fill;
To do what no one else can do as well;
This is to live. In spite of vanished breath,
To rise immortal—victor over death.

The Wise Physician

He touches us with tender hand ;
 We shrink in pain.
So slow are we to understand
 His wish so plain,
To shield us from the little hurt ;
 From lasting ill.
How waywardly our thoughts pervert
 His loving will.

But children in our inmost hearts,
 We cannot know
There's healing in the touch that smart
 And hurts us so.
But though we plead that He will spare
 The pain and tears,
He wisely disregards the prayer,
 Although he hears.

My New Neighbors

They're a charming little couple who have lately
come to town ;
Young, and not too rich, I fancy, for she's dressed in
dusky brown ;
Just the sober sort of color meant to wear the sum-
mer through,
Though he looks a trifle flashy in a vest of gorgeous
hue.

I have often seen them flitting past my window, and
am sure
They're a newly-wedded couple, she's so timid and
demure.
While, though somewhat consequential, yet a fonder
soul than he,
Or a more devoted husband, one would very seldom
see.

They're so quaintly captivating that I've often
wished I knew
Where they came from ; who their friends are ; where
they live, and what they do.

But they seemed so shy and distant, 'twas a genuine
surprise
When I found that they were building right before
my very eyes.

I discovered it this morning. Just imagine my de-
light!
For I'd never heard it hinted that they'd even bought
the site,—
And there was the foundation, and the frame almost
complete
Of the dearest little dwelling; airy, modest, strong
and neat.

Well, for such a youthful couple they display *un-*
common sense;
For no slender purse could long hold out against the
price of rents.
And besides, there's more enjoyment in a cabin all
one's own,
Than—if subject to a landlord—in a mansion of
brown stone.

And they're building, too, for comfort; not a penny's
worth of style;
Not a gable, or bay-window, and I really have to
smile

To see the queer material they get along with, yet,
'Tis a hopeful sign to see a pair too proud to go in
debt.

So cheerful, too, and light of heart. It almost seems
to bring
One's youth and hope right back again to hear that
fellow sing.
And to see her sweet, contented look and naïve,
delicious air,
As she flits about, and settles things by touches here
and there.

You may think me rude in staring; but I really can-
not keep
My eyes away. Though, let me state, 'tis not my rule
to peep
Round into people's houses, their domestic ways to
see;
But this winsome little couple have quite fascinated
me.

And I'm sure I'd never mention any little circum-
stance,
Any make-shift or economy that met my eye by
chance.

And in any case of accident, or sickness, if they'll
send,

They can count upon their neighbor for a warm and
helpful friend.

Yes, I'd like right well to know them. She is such a
little dear!

And I think 'twas his grand-uncle whom I knew in
town last year.

You should think I'd call? Well, hardly—'twould be
awkward, don't you see?

For their name is Robin Redbreast, and they're build-
ing in a tree.

A Villain Gets His Deserts

Across the bay window a funny old fellow,
In fuzzy black trousers and coat of pale yellow,
Is building himself a most beautiful palace
Of soft shining silver, while Carrie and Alice
Are watching him at it, as quiet as mice;
'Tis so wonderful how he can build it so nice.
How lightly he bounds here and there, like a ball,
Then seems to walk back upon nothing at all.
And where does he get that fine silver thread?
They conclude he must *think* it right out of his head.
He minds not their wonder and guessing, but goes
Right along with his work,—for you must not suppose

For a moment that what he is doing is play—
Projecting his plans in the wickedest way:
How down in this corner he intends, by and by,
To catch and imprison that vain Mrs. Fly,
Who goes gossiping, gadding, and aping fine airs
Instead of attending her household affairs.
And there, where he's made it so strong and secure,—
How he laughs just to think whom he means to
immure—

That young Mr. Hornet, who seems to suppose
Himself such a swell in his black satin clothes.
And right here, where appears such a broad open gap,
That innocent old Daddy-Long-Legs he'll trap.
And beside him Miss Miller, with her great staring
eyes,

Will struggle, and flutter, and hang till she dies.
Oh! a nice kind of heart has this cold-blooded
villain!

As he thinks, with mock piety, "Providence willin',
I'll ensnare every one of these light-headed things,
Going fooling about on their gay, silly wings.
If they wish to live long, and against want provide,
too,

Why don't they attend to their business as I do?"
Then he grins, and he winks, as he plots how to cheat
them,
And thinks when they're dead how he'll finally eat
them.

But Carrie and Alice, who can't see within
His bad, vicious heart, full of murder and sin,
Admire the fine house he has built with such speed,
And think him a very fine fellow indeed.
But just as he's finished his labors—the rascal—
And is feeling as safe as a king in his castle,
Along comes a monster so yellow and tall
And remorselessly wipes out king, castle, and all—

A bushy-haired thing, with a very long tail,
And behind it a stout Irish maid with a pail.
Then Alice begins to reproachfully chide her:
"Oh, Bridget! You've swept down our beautiful
spider!"

"Bad luck to his pictur'," says Bridget; "the baste,
To be shpoilin' the winder! I'll give him a taste
Or hot water onc't more, if he dares show his head!"
"Poor thing!" say the girls, "do you s'pose he is
dead?"

"He'll be deader," says Bridget, "if he thries for to
hinder

Me tidyin' up this beautiful winder!"

So this black-hearted wretch and his murderous plans
Came to grief, as you see, at a scrubbing-girl's hands.
Not the slightest suspicion had she of his sin, though,
Her thoughts being centered on cleaning her window.
Oh! it takes a long head, I assure you, to hit
On a plan that dull honesty may not outwit.
And a person on plain, simple duty intent,
Without thought of smartness, will oft circumvent
The cunning designs of some scheming old sinner
Who depends on his wits and his wiles for a dinner.
And he's wrong, I can tell you, though seeming so
clever,

Who thinks craft can win like good honest endeavor.

Possession

He found a diamond gleaming where it lay
Half hidden, guarded by the jealous earth;
Caught by its glitter, he was fain to stoop
And garner it, but guessed not half its worth.

Into the world, with gay and careless air,
Unconsecrate, he wore the precious prize;
Unmindful that it drew the wistful glance
Or baleful gleam of eager, covetous eyes.

But worth so true no usage could debase,
Nor gaze, howe'er unhallowed, could impair
The beauty wiser men beheld, amazed
That he so lightly held a thing so fair.

Yet he could not forget its lowly birth,
Nor that no eye admired it till his own;
And proudly thought its splendid radiance due
To its grand setting, and to it alone.

And still men envied him the matchless gem;
And still he wore it, blind to its true worth,
Till death, one day, all suddenly revealed
That he—not it—held kinship with the earth.

And then he knew the jewel he had deemed
Naught but the vassal of his royal will,
When he should be but common dust, would shine
Serene and pure, a priceless diamond still.

Arbutus

Ah! I knew thou must be hid
Somewhere these brown leaves amid,
 Blossom shy;
For thy green æsthetic dress,
Though so dark and lustreless,
 Caught my eye.

Few would guess such magic grace
Nestled in so joyless place
 'Neath the sun,
All these coarse things, dry and dead,
Pulled about thy modest head,
 Like a nun.

But I knew 'twas not thy way,
Like the bolder blooms of May,
 To beguile
Every idle passer-by
With the brightness of thine eye
 And thy smile.

Who thy nature understood,
Scarce were apt, in likelihood,
 To suppose
He could win thy fragrant heart
As the bee with careless art
 Woos the rose.

Only deep and changeless love,
Such as I in faith can prove,
 Could divine
Where to seek, or seeking, how
Win recluse demure as thou,
 Blossom mine.

An April Birthday

Methinks when in his love
And wise beneficence
God sent us here,
Lest we should utterly forget
The Heaven we left,
He sent the flowers to be always near,
Whispering of home to hearts that will but hear.
Ah! had we been bereft,
Sweet counsellor, of thee,
What would life be?

Thou, who came creeping hither in the spring,
With every little longing, living thing,
Must know their language well;
Then bid them tell,
These roses bright
With heaven's own light,—
Their wise hearts angel-taught—
What message they have brought.

Marguerite

So fair she looks and sweet,
The flowers beneath her feet
Smile just to see her pass:
The young impulsive grass
Springs up to shyly meet
The robe of Marguerite.

Nor touch nor smile she heeds,
But o'er the meadow speeds,
With stately head low bent,
And dreamy eyes intent.
Softly the winds entreat:
"Whither, O Marguerite?"

She stays not nor replies;
And now my watchful eyes
Behold her kneeling there
Above some treasure rare.
The curious winds repeat:
"What seek ye, Marguerite?"

I see her rise and pass
Back thro' the clinging grass;
O'er lips and wild-rose cheek
A smile plays hide-and-seek.
An echo, indiscreet,
Hints, "Seek ye Marguerite?"

Gone like a dream! Alone,
And curious, I must own,
To know what magic power
Concealed in herb or flower
Impelled the flying feet
Of stately Marguerite,

I bend above the place
Where knelt her shape of grace,
And lo! my eyes behold
A daisy's heart of gold
Bared to the summer's heat,—
Poor plundered Marguerite!

The ruff so quaintly worn
All scattered, reft and torn
By ruthless finger-tips!
With those sweet eyes and lips,
How could'st thou so ill-treat
Thy namesake, Marguerite?

Methinks that I can guess
What thou would'st ne'er confess:
To test its sibyl power
Was yonder shrinking flower
Of petals shorn complete,
O questioning Marguerite!

Ah! would it might be guessed
As easily,—the rest,—
If to the rhythmic thought,
“He loves me—Loves me not!”
My name kept time, my sweet!
My own! My Marguerite!

The Wild Flowers to Mabel

In Her Last Sleep

We bloomed for thee when came the sunshine, Mabel;
We watched thro' all the smiling April day;
We thought the happy birds would bring thee,
Mabel,—
'Twas not like thee to linger so away.

We waited all the tuneful May-time, Mabel,
Till tender skies of June began to weep,
When came the sad South Wind and whispered,
"Mabel
Has shut her starry eyes, and gone to sleep."

And then we waved and beckoned to thee, Mabel;
We smiled and nodded to thee from the dell;
We grieved because thou heeded not, and, Mabel,
We've come to kiss thee, dear, and say farewell.

To Elizabeth

To some rare souls there is no youth nor age,
No past nor future, only one great now :
Of such we do not ask, when falls a natal day,
“How old art thou?” but questions like to these :
“What have the by-gone years revealed to thee?
What secrets, strange and vast, hast thou with that
Far-fathoming line, the soul, drawn from the deeps
of time?

As thy frail barque hath braved its tortuous way
Among the breakers on life's varying sea,
What harbors hast thou found? what smiling bays,
Where voyagers may rest till storms be passed?
Hast marked them well? for others there will be
Who seeing thee sail lightly, gayly on,
May think the waters hide no treacherous reefs,
Nor dream that there is method in thy steering.”

O sweet, true, loving soul, so closely bound
And blent with that pure spirit, thine immortal self,
That e'en when least thou knew, thy quick response
To its swift magic touch oft turned thy course,
And bore thee safe away from threatened danger,

Know thou, that evermore thou art a guide,
A pilot, aye, a beacon-light to all
Who, marking thy safe, prosperous voyage
Thus far on life's sea, shall follow eager
In thy shining wake. Forget not thou, that they,
Perchance, have barques less strong and staunch than
thine—

Less quick to answer to the helmsman's touch.
Oh, keep thy light forever turned their way!
Be quick to warn, to rescue and to save,
For 'tis for this that souls so strong and brave
Are privileged to suffer!

The Ghost of the Christmas Goose

All my brief and sad existence
On the earth,
You denied me recognition,
Spite of worth.
Most preposterously, said you,
I behaved;
Grudged the least appreciation
That I craved.
Never sought I adulation,
But to be
Used with that consideration
Due to me.
When to prove my real distinction
I would loose
All my logic, you reviled me
For a goose.

It was hard, and much I quarreled
With my fate,

But all things, they say, come round to
Those who wait.
None accorded to me wisdom
While I breathed;
For my sage and seasoned merits
Now I'm wreathed,
Smothered with the wordless tributes
To my fame,
Your repleteness with my greatness
Bars to name.

All things do indeed come round to
Those who wait,
And no more I am disposed to
Fling at fate;
For with much enlightened vision
I perceive
No peculiar reason had I
Thus to grieve.
Men must laud no sentient being,
But instead
Bottle up their panegyrics
Till he's dead;
So I sagely bear no malice,
Since I find
'Tis a way you have of treating
All your kind.

And I join with right good feeling
In the toast
That you drink this Merry Christmas
To my ghost.

Recognition

I shut a rose—

A tender dewy rose—

Within thy hand:

Thou crushed it carelessly,

Nor knew its petals fell

About thy feet.—

Thy thoughts were far away—

And still didst wonder why

The faint perfume

Should haunt thee day by day.

I laid a rose—

A soft-lipped velvet rose—

Against thy breast:

It breathed a little sigh,

And then looked down

Upon its quivering leaves,—

Inhaled its breath,

And then, with lighted eye,

Thou kissed its full-fraught heart

Into thine own:

—'Twas happy so to die.

Lethæan Waltz

The notes so entrancing float down the long hall:
The lights all a-glancing laugh low as they fall:
The lilies and roses laugh softly to see
The joy of this measure to you and to me.
Then come, love, away on your light-tripping feet.
What is care or regret to a moment so sweet?
We'll drink of this rosy bright beaker of bliss:
'Tis a draught for the gods, dear, a waltz such as this.
We'll drink of this rosy bright beaker of bliss:
'Tis a draught for the gods, dear, a waltz such as this.

Perhaps by to-morrow we'll think with disdain
How heedless we grew with the music's refrain:
Perhaps by the grave light of morning 'twill seem
The veriest nothing, the froth of a dream:
But what does it matter if now we are glad?
No joy of to-day'll make the morrow more sad;
And as nothing is sure but the present, my sweet,
We will take what the fairies have strewn at our feet.
And as nothing is sure but the present, my sweet,
We will take what the fairies have strewn at our feet.

We will cast all our cares and our griefs to the wind ;
They will answer for cables our spirits to bind
When the lilt of the measure shall witch the dull sense,
And its buoyant bright captive waft joyfully hence.
No fear with such moorings to life's fickle bay
That the lightest-winged spirit could hie far away :
So come, love, a truce to the cold and the false ;
Sweet Lethe we'll drink in the strains of this waltz.
So come, love, a truce to the cold and the false ;
Sweet Lethe we'll drink in the strains of this waltz.

Genius

A ship strong and mighty, thou sailest life's sea :
Strange ports hast thou entered : lone islands to thee
Have yielded their treasure of spice and of gold :
Rare wealth dost thou carry, safe hid in thy hold.
Right gallant thy spirit, nor feelest to quail
Through loud-booming tempest or giant-winged gale.
'Neath fair skies and sunny thy course thou dost keep
Toward a bay on whose bosom lone palm-shadows
sleep.

But brief is thy tarry by happiest isle ;
Thou'rt lured by the palm-shadowed bay's dimpled
smile.

Of the white path behind thee no heed dost thou take,
Nor of frail barque in peril rough-rocked in thy wake :
Majestic thou movest, serene in thy might,
Nor markest yon sea-bird in storm-driven plight :
Compelled by thy greatness no pause canst thou give
If barque or if sea-bird shall perish or live.
Should barque overtake thee or bird reach thy mast,
Thou'lt shelter them safely till perils be past :
But if wrecked in the breakers all helpless they toss,
Thou'lt still sail serenely unconscious of loss.

O ship, strong and mighty, thus sailing life's sea,
So brave in thy beauty, so fearless and free;
Caressed by the wind-gods, by bright waters kissed,
Methinks that thy greatness yet something hath
missed.

The isles thou hast plundered such treasures yet bear,
The gold thou hast garnered is naught in compare.
The barque thou'st imperilled in grace rides the seas:
The silver-winged sea-bird low sings with the breeze.
Ah! sailing so swiftly, great ship, o'er life's sea,
What grace and what beauty lie veiled to thee.

Right true is thy compass and fair is thy goal:
All safely thou ridest past breaker and shoal:
Thou'lt reach the soft bay where the palm-shadows
sleep,
For staunch to thy course thou art destined to keep.
Were thy greatness yet greater, thy path were less
straight,
The palm-shadowed bay for thy coming would wait.
But the barque and the isle and the sea-bird's soft
breast
Nowhere shalt thou find at the goal of thy rest.
O yon Love-guided barque, floating fearless and free,
Yet nothing shall miss on the infinite sea!

Song of the Shadows

When evening's red blushes
 Pale into gray gleams;
When Night softly hushes
 The World into dreams;
When Darkness and Silence
 Low whisper, "Go free,"
'Tis then, Love, my spirit
 Flies swiftly to thee.

Unawed by the shadows,
 Unchilled by the night,
It knows naught of distance
 Or time in its flight.
For thine eyes are its beacon,
 Its shelter thy breast,
And thy love-hallowed presence
 Its haven of rest.

Threescore and Ten

The frosts of years lie thick upon thy brow to-day,—
Too thick for life's low-lying sun to melt away:
The westering shadows falling lend to thy dear face
A saintlier, serener charm, a tenderer grace.

I see thee at that restful hour of gloaming light,
Between the earlier gold of eve and dark of night:
The anxious hurrying cares of morn for thee are
past;
The turmoil of thy busier noon is hushed at last.

Thy helpful cheer-dispensing hands, and loyal heart,
Of all the burdens life's bestowed have borne their
part:
No toil have shirked, no care refused, but willingly
Each task performed, each trust fulfilled, and faithfully.

Now may the duskier evening shades as soft diffuse
Around thee as the grayness creeps o'er sunset hues:
And when the darkness of the night comes fairly on,
May gentle sleep for thee presage the inner Dawn.

Old Letters

I smile as I take them in my hands,
Held neat and close in their silken bands,
 And filed in a careful row,
To think how the girl-heart used to greet
Each oblong square with a quickened beat,
 Some dozen years ago.

It seems like an almost wanton thing
To loosen this from its binding string,
 And open the folded page;
And I blush at the first words' foolish guise,
Scanned in the light of the woman's eyes,
 Grown calm, and clear, and sage.

A true love-letter, closely writ;
But I can but think, as I follow it
 On to the tender close,
How the one that wrote, and the one that read,—
The lover fond,—and the girl,—are dead;
 Though none but the woman knows.

Not unfamiliar the name beneath
The "Yours till death," but the well-worn sheath
Like a headstone strangely seems;
For it bears the name of the girl that's dead;
A name for many a year unsaid,
Save in the woman's dreams.

And I know, as the tears unbidden rise,
Clouding the words from the calm, clear eyes,
In a strange unmeaning blur,
That the young girl's ghost is gazing through
The tender mist at the name she knew;
But the tears are not for her!

At Last my Queen

Still thee and rest, O trembling heart;
Gone are the fears that came between.
No more, no more shall we two part;
I hold thee close, at last my queen.
At last my queen.

I hold thee close to this true heart;
E'en death shall shrink to come between;
No more, no more shall we two part;
Life of my life, my love-crowned queen.
My love-crowned queen.

Long patient years I watched afar,
While thou didst keep thy way serene,
Of other lives the tender star;
Now thou art mine, at last my queen.
At last my queen.

Thou would'st not let thy speech betray,
What from sweet eyes I joyous glean.
Would those dear lips that truth unsay,
My modest flower, my snow-white queen?
My snow-white queen.

If Thou Art Near

When dawns that sorrow-darkened day
That lays my dearest dead away,
Grief cannot yet be quite despair
If I but know that thou art there.

Tho' friends I've fondly cherished be,
By cold estrangement, lost to me,
One joy is mine—what else so dear?
If—more than friend—thou still art near.

Turn! turn, O Time, thy tireless wheel!
Bring what thou wilt of woe or weal;
But cease ere falls that night of fear
When I shall say, "Thou art not here."

In Perfect Peace

In perfect peace! O promise dear,
That hearts shall find release from fear;
That care and grief shall swiftly flee
From him whose mind is stayed on Thee!
Is stayed on Thee, O Rock secure!
Strength everlasting to endure!
How vain shall break life's storm-lashed sea
O'er him whose mind is stayed on Thee!

In perfect peace! O thought divine
To this strife-wearied soul of mine!
When shall I know what peace may be
To him whose mind is stayed on Thee!
On Thee, O Rest, O Refuge sure!
What cleansing fire can make so pure
That this self-blinded soul may see
Its perfect peace alone in Thee?

In perfect peace! In perfect peace!
O blessed hope! O sweet release!
O eyes from tears forever free,
For him whose mind is stayed on Thee.

Is stayed on Thee, O Truth! O Love!
O Light that leads yon home-bound dove,
Guide thou this soul till it shall be
In perfect peace at last with Thee!

Soundless Voices Serenade

Wake, Love, the night is fading;
The flowers have gone to sleep;
The moon her face is shading;
The dews begin to weep.
The restless winds are making
A weary, worldless plain
To distant waves, soft breaking
In sobs of stifled pain.

The lonesome tree-tops sighing,
Their mournful questions bring;
The lowlier boughs replying,
In sad duet they sing.
I know the trees are asking
Why pales the night's pure flame;
I know the boughs are breathing
My absent night-queen's name.

The stars are weary watching,
Through filmy folds of white,
To catch thine eyes' reflection;
They miss thee, dear, to-night.

Then wake! ah, wake, sweet dreamer!
If cold and deaf to me,—
Yet heed these tender voices
That plead so mute with thee!

Estranged

All other hearts for thee may freely pray,
 "Be all dear blessings thine."
All other lips may frame thee grateful songs,
 Save these mute lips of mine.
'Neath cold death-breathing doubt my prayer lies
 crushed;
Upon my quivering lip the song is hushed.

No other heart could hold the boundless joy
 My heart would crave for thee.
No other lips can lift my shattered song,—
 Restore,—and set it free.
The prayer should charm away thine every ill;
The song, thy peace-crowned days with music fill.

..

Nydia

Like some slow, dreamful song she moves
With silent step and rhythmic grace
Taught her of sound, not sight.
One outstretched, slender guardian hand
Alive with subtle, seeing sense
Unknown to hands that merely serve
A master and a guide.

Her rapt, uplifted, listening face,
Like pure, white-petaled, closed flower
That waits for heaven's kiss,
Reflects the light it may not see
But ever feels and sweetly trusts,
And knows no other way.

Dear Nydia, sweet and brave and true!
Thine endless night hath taught thee thus
To find thy sure, unfaltering way
Firm-poised and unafraid.

The dark is round me, too, alas!
O may I find the fearless faith
To walk like thee that higher way,
Erect and sure, tho' all alone,
And with my soul's night-shrouded eyes
Unseeing e'en as thine!

The New Madonna

The awe-tinged dawn of new-waked motherhood looks from her dream-sweet eyes. Lo, where she stands, light-poised as some shy, startled thing roused from its still repose. Close-clasped her babe,—her wondrous babe,—her tender cheek drooped lily-wise to touch the flower-soft face. Protection, love, all tenderness breathes from her garment's folds. And o'er above and thro' all else the vibrant strain of some new chord within her soul just swept and thrilled to living tones, whose power she feels but cannot yet define.

Sweet Mother, to what far, dim heights thy sacred name has lifted thee above the world! Remote and lone, thou standest where the dull, discordant notes of earth are swept by thy pure, chastened love to one soft, tender theme.

The Carrier Dove

**Haste thee, O Silver Wings,
Nor stay, nor rest,
Till thou dost find a welcome,
Sweet and warm,
From one who knows thee:
Upon that sheltering breast,
Safe from the storm,
Gently repose thee.
By that kind hand caressed,
Forget thy weary flight,—
Dream thee of happier things—
And in the hush and silence of the night
Breathe thou to him my message—Silver Wings.**

Were I to Live Again

Were I to live again, ah me! were I to live again,
A flesh-imprisoned soul, as now, among my fellow-
men,

I would not ask, dear God, that Thou
My newly-vestured soul endow
With more or greater gifts than now,
Were I to live again.

I would not live again, ah me! I would not live again,
To struggle for a place among my struggling fellow-
men,

To bear ambition in my breast;
To hear the whisper of unrest;
To strive, to weep—ah! so unblest,
I would not live again!

Were I to live again, ah me! were I to live again,
To bend, once more, beneath the yoke that bows my
fellow-men,

I would not crave, dear God, to be
Above Thy lowliest placed by Thee,
Thro' any gift vouchsafed to me,
Were I to live again!

But if to live again, ah me! but if to live again,
Could mean that I, by ranking least among my
fellow-men,
Might bear within a tranquil breast
The tenderest love that ever blest
A weary brother, or caressed
A babe to smile again;

And if to live again, ah me! and if to live again,
Might give to every helpless one, despised of other
men,
A refuge safe within my heart,—
If in the meanest thing, a part
I might discern, of Thee, who art
Beyond all mortal ken,—

If thus to live again, ah me! if thus to live again,
To heal the weary, aching hearts and stay the tears
of men,
Could be my privilege—ah me!
How more than blessed should I be,
One sacred gift to hold of Thee,
And live to *love* again!

The Inner Dawn

Here on this rigid bed
Moveless I lie:
Cold shapes anear me creep,
Colder am I.
When will these shadows dread
Cease whispering round my head?
Would they but silence keep,
Soon could I sleep.

Hush! did I hear my name
Blent with a sigh?
Was that a voice that moaned,
"So young to die"?
What? then is some one dead?
These whispers round my head!
Would they but silence keep,
Soon could I sleep.

How soft that music's strain!
Ah! now I dream!
Whence come these flower scents?
Close by they seem.

Roses—roses, white and red—
Whisper—whisper round my head!
When will they silence keep,
That I may sleep?

What light is this I see?
Can it be morn?
Why! now I seem to be
Lifted and borne
Up—upward! ah, this rare,
Buoyant blueness everywhere!
Let not the silence break,
Lest I awake.

The Song They Heard

"How poor, ye souls—how dead to harmony,
That catch no music from yon singing spheres!
Cease from your toil and list a while to me,
I will interpret to your earth-dulled ears."

But none made pause or caught the minstrel's fire.
"Ye clay!" he cried, "ye kindred of the sod!
No more will I entreat ye to aspire,
But lift my soul and sing alone to God!"

He swept the chords, fast losing in the thrill
All thought of earth,—when lo! a wondrous thing—
One long, sweet strain, the earth-bound heart stood
still,
Forgot its cares, and joyed to hear him sing.

The Gift of Gifts

Guardian of the Gates of Birth,
Where all souls must pass to earth,
Shining white, an angel stands
Bearing gifts from Allah's hands;
And each soul must pause to make
Choice of gifts for Allah's sake.

All good stars and true, were met
When thy feet toward the earth were set:
Best of gifts, from Allah great,
Held the angel at the gate;
And thou, pausing, scarcely knew
Which to choose ere passing through.

Music, golden-voiced and fair,
Throbb'd upon the lambent air:
Form and color charmed thy sense:
Myriad-graced, soft eloquence
Swept and swayed thee—with her spell
Almost won thee,—when there fell
Poesy's celestial thrill,
Touched thee, and thy soul grew still.

Smiled the Angel then, and spake:
"Which sweet gift, for Allah's sake,
Would'st thou bear with thee to earth,
That all men may bless thy birth?"

All souls feel the prophet's breath
At the hours of birth and death;
And thy soul was more than wise,
Gazing with unclouded eyes
Down the little span of years
'Portioned for this vale of tears;
Softly smiling, thus it spake:
"This my choice for Allah's sake:
All these gifts are good, and blest
He who singleth one as best:
Blest more richly, happier still
He of mightier heart and will,
Daring *all* to choose—but no,—
All-wise Allah wills not so.
Free, unburdened would I then
Dwell among my fellow-men,—
Angel, in thy bosom there
Hast thou not a gift more rare?
Suffer me *that* gift to take
And to wear for Allah's sake."

"Child of Wisdom, trebly blest!"
And the angel from her breast

Flashed a jewel, swiftly raised :
On thy brow a white star blazed.
“Go,” she whispered, “Loved of Fate.”
Passed thee through, and closed the gate.

Two-score years, perchance, and ten
Thou hast walked the ways of men ;
Known life's varying hopes and fears ;
Seen its sunshine dashed with tears ;
Weighed its losses 'gainst its gains ;
Mixed its pleasures with its pains ;
Borne thy cares and griefs alone—
Others' sorrows made thine own ;
Through such ways as love can lend,
Gained the sacred name of “Friend.”
All those gifts that at thy birth
Thou refused to bear to earth,
Still are thine, for thou canst share
Thro' thy gift what others bear.
He is nearest Allah's heart
Who doth hold himself apart
From the works of Allah's hands ;
Who as king and master stands
Far from all, but thus to be
Near to all in sympathy.

When once more thou near'st the Gates
Where the shining angel waits,—

Death is but another birth;
From the twilight land of earth
Souls repass the portals white
Into Allah's Land of Light,—
She shall know thee, who so blest
All souls thro' the soul's request:
In the jewel flashing white,
Shall discern an added light
Grown more lustrous; while afar
Mortals shall behold a star.

So doth Allah comfort send
When he takes from Man a Friend.

Resignation of the Heart's Desire

Because it is so dear, thus willingly
I lay it in Thy hand to keep for me.
'Tis far too great, too perfect, and too pure
In trust with human weakness; I were sure
In verity of loving, to deface—
To mar, perhaps forever, all its grace.

'Tis sweet the having cherished, even tho'
The rare perfection only served to show
This eager heart, and crudely selfish will
They know not how to strive for it, and still
So sacred hold, its worth to so revere,
Achieved, 'twere all could make achievement dear.

To only glimpse its brightness from afar,
Nor ever nearer, as we watch a star,
Were better than to gain it but to know,
Possessing, I had lost it.—Even so,
Until I come to claim it worthily,
I lay it in Thy hand to keep for me.

The Debotee

You think because I speak no word
That I am cold and care not ;
How wrong you read a woman's heart
I soon could prove, but dare not.

While voice and eye and smile enthrall,
As pleading tones you spare not,
I answer not nor meet your gaze,
Because in truth, I dare not.

Then turn a while your eyes away,—
Nay, that poor hand ensnare not,—
And listen while I try to say
Why grant your plea I dare not.

For one who vows to scale the heights
And, howe'er steep, forbear not,
'Tis not to pause for love's sweet flowers,
Fair though they be—I dare not.

I know a flower to whose rare grace
These purple blooms compare not:
Come, seek with me its dwelling-place.
Ah! now 'tis you who dare not!

When They Shall Veil My Face Away

When they shall veil my face away,
Beneath the coffin-lid,
And friends shall speak in tender way
Of things I said and did,
What can it matter then to me,
If most extolled or blamed I be?

The kind forbearance with my faults,
The honest spoken praise,
May serve to fire my lagging zeal,
And cheer discouraged days;
But when my throbbing heart is still,
What count me these, for good or ill?

The what I am and strive to be—
The "house not made with hands"
Is all my unsealed eyes shall see,
And if it falls or stands,
Shall be my one great thought that day
When they shall veil my face away.

If Thou Wert Dead To-day

If thou wert dead to-day,
And I above thy clay
 In sorrow bent,
No tear might dim mine eye;
No faintest sob or sigh
 Of anguish pent,
Might this poor heart betray,
If thou wert dead to-day.

If thou wert dead to-day,
The tenor of my way
 I still must keep,
Nor show of grief a sign;
No kin art thou of mine—
 What right to weep?
My tears I yet must stay,
If thou wert dead to-day.

If thou wert dead to-day,
All other lips might say
 They loved thee well.

Dumb must my lips still be
My heart's great love to thee
 They may not tell.
Mute must they be for aye,
If thou wert dead to-day.

Star-Eyes That Haunt Me

Where, O beloved,
Where shall I seek thee?
Long have I wandered, and far!
Eyes softly beaming
Haunt all my dreaming,—
Soft as the light of
Yon shimmering star.

If in the star-world
Dwelleth thy spirit,
Then came I earthward in vain—
Lonely sojourning,
Sadly returning:
Naught have I garnered
But longing and pain.

But, O beloved,
If thou, a mortal,
Somewhere art waiting for me,
Space cannot daunt me—
Star-eyes that haunt me
Shall by their shining
Yet guide me to thee!

The protest

Part—part from thee,
Light of my groping spirit?
Nay—nay, it must not be!
Speak not the word,
Lest Fate herself should hear it
And so decree!

O, gentle heart,
The tenderest and truest,
Bid hasty lips be still!
For sure methinks
Already that thou ruest
What they would will!

Speak thou instead,
And say 'twere wildest treason
What those dear lips had told!
What have sweet lips
To do with ancient reason?
Love grows not old!

Life is but brief,
Yet long those lives and dreary
By love's bright star unblest.
That star shall guide,
O lonely heart and weary,
To sweetest rest!

To Aunt Mary's Niece

I wonder, dear, sweet, happy girl—
Twice seven years to-day—
If in that merry heart of yours
There ever comes to stay
A little lurking wish to know
What makes Aunt Mary love you so.

You know so many other girls
As bright and good!—a few
Have just as warm and faithful hearts,
As loving and as true.
Aunt Mary knows them, too, perhaps,
But, dear, they are not *you*.

What makes us love that little flower
That grows so low and sweet
And snuggles close to mother earth
With clinging hands and feet?
What makes us find it sweeter far
Than roses, vinks, and lilies are?

There may be many reasons, still
Aunt Mary knows but two:
Arbutus is Arbutus, and
She loves it. Is it true
That so she loves a certain girl,
Because that girl is you?

Gethsemane

I read the story, shamed to think
 Thy loved, thy chosen three,
Through that heart-breaking hour had slept
 In dark Gethsemane.
I thought how weak indeed the flesh,
 That God-like grief to see,
That sweet reproach to hear, and then
 Forget to watch with Thee!
Not so, my Master—nay, not so,
 Could'st thou have chosen me—
Hadst wept and prayed that night alone
 In dark Gethsemane.

Thro' happy years beside me walked
 A soul so great and free,
So pure and true—ah, none might know
 How dear that soul to me!
It shared my burdens, soothed my griefs—
 Could love more tender be?
With grateful heart aglow, I cried,
 “Would I might die for thee!”

Ah, Master, could a heart so staunch
To one far less than Thee,
Have failed to keep its sleepless watch
Thro' thy Gethsemane?

He chasteneth whom he loveth most.
God's hand fell heavily;
Beneath it sank the soul I loved,
Bowed low in agony.
In selfish cares enwrapped was I;
That soul so dear to me
Passed white and silent while I slept
Through its Gethsemane.
Perhaps, O Master, even so,
Tho' Thou hadst chosen me,
Thou still hadst wept that night alone,
In dark Gethsemane.

Similar in Blossom

I thought I knew you, dainty vine;
It was a fond conceit of mine
That I had found a charm in you
Not many knew:

I never saw you out of place;
You always seemed the soul of grace,
And ever found with pliant will
Some place to fill.

But now you come, a sweet surprise,
In what, to me, is novel guise:
All smiling, wreathed in fairy bloom
Whose rare perfume
Enchants me, till the drowsy bees
Seem droning round the locust trees,
And elfin voices seem to hum,
"The summer's come."

What wrought this wonder, dainty vine?
Are you like other friends of mine,
Who modest doubt their giftedness
To charm and bless,—

Just finding where the secrets hid,
~~And pouring~~ out, as Mary did,
The precious ~~spiced~~ without spare,
So love fare?

Alone

Through the cold world,
 Wrapped in its shadows,
Joyless and silent I roam;
 Strange to its pleasures,
 Dead to its sorrows,
Far have I wandered from home.
 Hearts that are true,
 Tender, and faithful,
Measure their beats with my own.
 Still through the desert
 Trackless and dreary,
Homeless I wander and lone.

Naught can assuage
 Or still the deep longing
That burns evermore in my breast.
 The world cannot give it,
 Nor fond hearts enshrine it,—
The coveted home of my rest.
 Somewhere I missed it
 Back in life's morning,—

The star that blazed over the dome;
Perhaps it is waiting
Above the dark valley,
Still waiting to pilot me home.

On the Heights

How shall I frame a prayer,
A prayer so pure and free
That on its broad, white wings my soul,
Freed from all selfish care,
May lift more near to Thee?

No gift that I could ask
But Thou dost hold for me,—
More free to grant than I to take,—
And this my only task:
To find that gift in Thee.

I cannot ask for light,
For leading, or to be
Kept in Thy care, for this I know:
Thou art Protection, Light,
Strength, Guidance,—All to me.

O Wise, O Boundless Power!
O Tender, Changeless Love!

The only prayer this heart can frame
Is such as breathes the flower,
When far above its earth-bound feet
It wafts in grateful love
An incense sweet
To Thy Most Perfect Name!

My friend

I would not have you quite perfection, dear:
The scenes in nature that I love the best,
And oftenest seek for refuge and for rest,
Are not where cultured mead and placid mere
In smiling neatness such dimensions speak
As frugal pains may order. No, to me
The spot that offers most of sympathy
Is wild and richly varied; sometimes bleak,
Harsh, chilling, then as tender and as warm
To fold and shelter as a mother's arm.

'Tis full of changeful myst'ry, swift surprise:
Here brooks that singly scarce would moist a fern,
Mad with the joy of meeting, haste and turn
And dash themselves to death,—then straightway rise
White-garmented. Stern-visaged from afar,—
Gray, frowning rocks, grown genial on approach,
Reach, smiling, to yon blossoms that encroach
On mossy beards. Here glints of shining spar
Point how the flintiest soften with great age.
Here chasms yawn, here lifts the towering peak
Where vision roams at will; lost boundaries speak
How climbing finds unlooked-for heritage.

In scenes like this my soul is sure to find
A sweet uplifting toward a purer life,—
A larger freedom; pass the petty strife,
And care of mere existence from the mind.
In the vast pressure of the things beyond
Man's power to compass or to subjugate,
The spirit swiftly claims its lost estate,
And rises free, exultant to respond
To that for which it feels a kinship true,
The majesty that slavery deems austere.

I would not then find all perfection, dear,
All finished smoothness realized in you:
Such were a nature shorn of all delights.
I love you for the largeness that defies
Swift knowing; e'en your own clear-seeing eyes
Discoveries yet shall make of rugged heights
And awesome depths within; of tender blooms
That soften harshness; of warm tropic airs
That play round arctic humors, unawares
Of singing moods that dash to sudden glooms.

All these unfathomed things that wake the fear
Of self within the self, and oft surprise
The one who looks such questions from your eyes,
Make you to me more than perfection, dear.

Lobe's Visits

He stood within the doorway of my heart,
A morn in May,
Soft, tender hands beseechingly outheld,
Pleading to stay.
But proud Ambition tarried in my breast;
No room was there for this fair stranger guest.

And so regretfully I bade him come
Another day.
He looked with sad, reproachful eyes at me,
Then turned away.
Had I then dreamed a god was at my heart,
Could I—ah! could I have let him so depart?

He came again one golden summer noon,
But paused not long,
For myriad guests made merry at my board,
With laugh and song.
The timid stranger, hearing sounds so gay,
Fled from the door and hurried on his way.

He stood beside me 'mid the golden grain
And yellowing leaves ;
He smiled, but I was busy gathering in
My ripened sheaves.
No time had I to dally with such guest ;
I needs must work to earn a later rest.

The winter winds fraught with the damp of death,
Strike dread and fear
Through all the cheerless chambers of my heart,
Empty and drear.
Ah ! Love, to-night thou should'st not plead in vain,
Would'st thou but knock at this poor heart again !

The Soul's Easter

Chill Night and Sorrow sat, all mourner-wise,
With ebon wings deep shading woful eyes,
Before the sealed door that shut the day
And all its sunshine from a heart away.
Then one came by who wore the tender light
Of Eden in her pure face, blossom-white;
Upon the lids of those sad watchers there
She set the seal of slumber; lo! the air
Moved with the might of wings, and whitely o'er
The shade athwart the heart's wide-riven door,
A light would shame the morning streamèd wide,
Where two sat silent, watching on each side.
Hope came at dawn, as came she oft, to lay
A rose-wreath; then turned in tears away:
But when she saw, in dark-robed Sorrow's place,
Love, with the tender starlight in her face,
The great, strong angel Peace beside the door,
And smiling Day where Night had been before,
Sweet Hope essayed again to thread the strings
Of that mute heart. The rustle of her wings
Woke Faith, who rose with wan, uncertain smile
From her long sleep, gazed wistfully a while,

Then, with the full dawn breaking in her eyes,
Stooped low, and bade dead Aspiration rise.
He, at her whisper, burst his winding-sheet,
And sped across the hills on wingèd feet.

The Test

Not the deed, ah, no! not the deed,
But the doer He watcheth. No heed
He taketh if well or if ill
Be the doing. He noteth the will,
And the hiddenmost purpose that lies
In the heart all unveiled to his eyes.

Not the seed, ah, no! not the seed,
But the sower He testeth. If weed
Shall spring from the sowing, if tares
Or wheat, is the least of His cares.
What prompteth the sower to sow,
Sufficeth the Master to know.

Not the word, ah, no! not the word,
But the heart's deepest utterance is heard
When the world is subdued, and the air
All hushed to the spirit of prayer.
No language that speaketh so clear
As Love to the infinite ear.

The Sleep-Walker

Swift flying through deserted streets,
A midnight runner sped,
In terror of the inky dark,
Loud crying, "Hope is dead!"

The sleepers started; flashed the lights
Thro' casements; high and clear
Brave voices, quick protesting, rose,
" 'Tis false; Hope dwelleth here."

The runner paused, his terror gone.
Fast hasting to his side,
Came one whose wisdom-lighted eyes
Gazed at him calm and wide:

"Thou didst but dream, a wild, false dream.
Poor soul, know this," he said:
"There'll none be found to bear the news
When Hope is really dead."

O Heart of Gold

The Buttercups

O heart of gold,
That showerest wide
Thy royal gifts
On every side,
Unasking if
They gathered be,—
O heart of gold,
Thou teachest me!
For I too oft
Have sought to trace
The deed unto
Its destined place;
Have longed to share
The fruitage grown
From seeds my hands
Have sparsely sown.

O heart of gold,
To thickly strow
Love's deeds uncounted
As we go,

Turns desert wilds
To fields of grace,
And makes the world
A fairer place.
Henceforth as thou
Content I bide
My heart's best gifts
To scatter wide,
Nor ask that one
Shall gathered be.
O heart of gold,
Thou teachest me!

Compensation

Our ruthless birthdays, hurrying by,
Unloose the leaves of Eden's flower
That thrilled to childhood's happy sigh
And bloomed in youth's glad hour.

We watch them where they fluttering fall,
Sweet petals paling in their sleep;
We know the years will claim them all
And turn away to weep.

But if some soft, late summer day
The dreamful earth and trancing sky
Entice us backward o'er the way
That saw our joy-blooms die:

Along the green low-bending bough,
Where once the rose and opal played,
In golden fruit, thick-clustering now,
We read why blossoms fade.

Consider the Lilies

It never thought to question why
'Twas fettered so. It only knew
A smile had beckoned from the sky.
It cast its little tremblings by,
And yearningly and trustingly
The lily grew.

It grew, and far above the clay
That held its swelling heart entombed,
Up toward a shining world that lay
All in the light, stretched longingly
Its little soul that naught could stay,
Till hopefully and joyfully
The lily bloomed.

It bloomed, and lo! in white array
Reflected back intensified
The glory of that world that lay
All in the light. One rapturous day,
A day at holy Easter-tide,
Its pure heart found love's perfect way—
One little sigh of ecstasy,
Then thankfully and peacefully
The lily died.

The Golden Wedding

To Mr. and Mrs. Russell on their Golden Wedding-Day.

Friends Dear and Well Belovèd: If you knew
 What I this day,
Upon the shrine our love has builded true,
 Had meant to lay:
 What I had thought so joyfully
 To cull from the heart's garden,
 Fresh with dew,
And, singing, weave into a wreath for you,
 In happy way,
 As poets do:

If you could only know the Eden grace
 My dream-flowers wore:
 If you had seen the face
Each lifted sunward; marked its tender hue;
Or had you caught the subtle fragrance lent
 To the fine air
By those pure blossoms, where
 They sweetly grew

Close to your name, and bent
And listened softly, and their sweetness blent
With thoughts of you,
As blossoms do:

If this you had seen, or now could see,
Dear friends who love me so,
Ah! you would be
Ready to weep with me
That now so mean
A garland I am forced to glean
From that waste garden-place.
But—happier thought!—perchance
Your soft regret
And gentle sorrow for me
May enhance
The meagre worth of my poor offering,
And help you to forget
All else but that in weak imperfect way,
It strives to utter all my love would say.

The Homing Heart

There's a white sunny house
Near the shadiest street
Where a patriarch elm arches wide;
There's a smooth gravelled way
'Twixt the bordering green,
And an oval-topped maple beside.

There's a deep mossy well
In a safe sheltered nook
Where the clear, cooling waters abound;
There's a little white gate,
And a garden beyond,
Such as poets weave fancies around.

There's a worn wooden seat
'Neath a plaintive old pine
That croons in low lullaby tones;
There's a bank that slopes down
To a maize-covered mead,
And a stream that sings over the stones.

To the near-lying west
Where the azure-crowned hills
Their fleecy mantillas have tossed,
There's a light over all,
Like the smile that went out
From the earth when fair Eden was lost.

There's a heart far away
By the wide western sea,
And it flies on the wings of its dreams
To that house with its well
And its garden, asleep
Where the moon's softened radiance streams.

For the white silent house
Shelters faces that wear
All the hallowing touches of time,
And hearts that are tuned
To the tenderest note
Of affection's far-echoing chime.

And the heart far away
By the wide western sea
Awakes with the morning's first beams,
And smiles as it thinks
Of that peaceful old home,
And the faces it saw in its dreams.

Sunset on the Bay

Down thro' the warm amethyst,
Thro' the blue and the rose,
In the sea he has kist
To a mellowing mist,
He sinks to repose.

If to the love-light at play
In the dawn's dewy eyes,
Or up thro' the gray
Of the unsmiling day
He next shall arise,

My heart may not answer, nor e'en
If ever again
'Twill mark his glad sheen,
For dark lies between
The now and the then.

Ah! yonder there riseth a star;—
Sad questionings cease,—
Across heaven's bar
It watcheth afar
And whispers me "Peace."

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